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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Bronna Kahle
Chairwoman of Michigan House Health Policy Committee
N991 House Office Building
Lansing Michigan, 48893
State of Michigan

RE: Support of HB 4657

Dear Representative Kahle:

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide strong support of HB 4657: Health Insurers; definition of treatment of autism spectrum disorders; to include parent-implemented model of intervention, introduced in the House on April 15, 2021.

"Parent implemented model of intervention" means an evidence-based model in which parents directly use individualized intervention practices with their children to increase positive learning opportunities and the acquisition of important skills, and in which parents learn to implement these practices in their home or community, or both, through a structured parent training program. A supervising health professional must regularly review and consider whether the model is being appropriately applied, whether it is effective, and whether it continues to be medically necessary. The review and consideration under this subdivision must be done in person or by use of 2-way real-time audiovisual technology.

My name is Janet Ringle-Bartels, and I am the owner of Children's Therapy Corner (established 1997); the largest privately-owned pediatric rehabilitation company in the state of Michigan, serving hundreds of families in Lansing, Midland and Traverse City. Previous to the Michigan legislation of 2012, I personally observed families struggle to provide the necessary intervention without the financial support of the medical coverage that their insurance premiums failed to support. The state of Michigan finally recognized the medical diagnosis of autism and the necessity of financial support through insurance-based coverage. The law recognized evidenced-based intervention for occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, physical therapy and applied behavioral analysis (ABA).

Michigan faces another intervention crisis: the need for diversity of ASD rehabilitation options. There is not a single intervention model that stands in isolation for appropriate rehabilitation. Within the mixture of evidenced-based interventions, we as rehabilitation specialists all strive, at some level, to educate, inform and empower parents/guardians. There is an obvious omission of insurance coverage for one of the most important needs for families: a direct training methodology designed to empower families to understand their role and **how they can assist their children** within the least restrictive environment-the home.

"Evidence-based, intensive intervention models for young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) includes the use of parent-implemented models that are developmental and relationship-based (PIM DRB). Parent-implemented models of Intervention include programs in which parents are responsible for carrying out some or all of the intervention(s) with their own child. Parents are trained by professionals one-on-one or in group formats in home or community settings. Methods for training parents vary, but may include didactic instruction, discussions, modeling, coaching, or ongoing

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performance feedback. Once parents are trained, they proceed to implement all or part of the intervention(s) with their child. Parent-implemented models can be used effectively to address social, behavior, communication, joint attention, play, cognitive, school-readiness, academic, and adaptive skills.

There are varied parent-implemented programs. At Children's Therapy Corner (CTC), in addition to other rehabilitation methodologies, we have provided a parent-implemented model that is fully backed by research and qualified as evidenced-based. We offer the PLAY Project™ an evidenced-based, parent-implemented model based on the DIR® (developmental, Individualized, relationship-based) theory of Stanley Greenspan, MD, proven to improve social interaction, communication, and functional development. This parent-implemented model, created by Dr. Richard Solomon, emphasizes the importance of helping parents/guardians become their child's best partner. Children's Therapy Corner has partnered with the PLAY Project™ for over 17 years to provide this intervention option for our families. Our families recognize the importance and benefit of the training and the implementation. We consistently train our therapists in the PLAY Project™ methodology and support through training of consultants to implement the model within the homes. The families are engaged, empowered and with this increased knowledge are more involved in all treatment methodologies. Parent-implemented programs are a strong adjunct to rehabilitation methods. CTC has recognized the benefits with our families. The families have increased understanding of their child's needs, recognize their impact on their child's development and enhanced awareness of how to advocate for their child. Families are a significant part of and contributor to our rehabilitation teams. That collaboration is essential.

Exclusion of the evidenced-based parent-implemented programs eliminates not only empowering families and strengthening family units, but also reduces an option that is proven beneficial and cost-effective. Intervention can be cost prohibitive to families without financial support from insurance coverage. What is the rationale to eliminate an evidence-based approach, that specifically empowers families, helps these children and demonstrates a cost-savings factor? I know that families want the inclusion of a parent-implemented program but cannot afford it.

As we recognize the complexity of needs of children with ASD and the necessity of alternative rehabilitation options, inclusion of parent-implemented models of intervention is vital. The research is clear that these programs are effective, are needed and provide an option which is both cost-saving and meets the premise of the law for evidenced-based practice. The more that we can provide to the children with ASD and their families, the likelihood we will meet the language of the Michigan law:

It is within the scope of rehabilitation practice for children with a diagnosis of autism, to provide evidenced based practices that will 'develop, maintain, or restore to the maximum extent practicable, the functioning of an individual.'

Pass HB 4657: Health Insurers; definition of treatment of autism spectrum disorders; to include parent-implemented model of intervention; introduced in the House on April 15, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Locations: Lansing, Midland, Traverse City